



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna

Mandarin Chinese

Curriculum Specification

LEAVING CERTIFICATE
Ordinary and Higher Level

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Glossary

This glossary is intended to clarify concepts and terms used in this specification for the reader.

Ab initio: Ab initio is a Latin term meaning from the beginning ('ab' meaning from and 'initio' meaning beginning).

Action-oriented: This approach views learners as social agents and active participants in their own learning. It implies the use of the target language by learners while engaging in purposeful, collaborative tasks.

Aural: In aural reception activities, the language user receives and processes a spoken input produced by one or more speakers.¹

CEFR: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages published by the Council of Europe in 2001. This is a framework of reference that provides tools, guidelines and resources for the development of language curricula, textbooks and assessment tools and programmes to support the teaching and learning of languages. The CEFR Companion Volume was published in 2018.

Input: Instructions, materials, etc. selected or produced by teachers and/or learners.²

Interaction: Interaction includes communicating, collaborating, turn-taking and/or asking for clarification in order to co-construct meaning and is fundamental to language learning.

Logograph: In a written language, a logograph is a written character that represents a word or phrase. A writing system, such as for Mandarin Chinese, that is based on logograms is called a logographic system.

Media literacy: Media literacy encompasses the practices that allow people to access, critically evaluate, and create or manipulate media. Media literacy is not restricted to one medium.

Multilingualism: The co-existence of different languages in society.

Mediation: In mediation, the user/learner acts as a social agent who creates bridges and helps to construct or convey meaning, sometimes within the same language, sometimes from one language to another (cross-linguistic mediation). The focus is on the role of language in processes like creating the space and conditions for communicating and/or learning, collaborating to construct new meaning, encouraging others to construct or understand new meaning, and passing on new information in an appropriate form. The context can be social, pedagogic, cultural, linguistic or professional.

Output: Language composed or generated by the learners themselves.

Plurilingualism: Plurilingualism is the dynamic and developing linguistic repertoire of an individual user/learner³ in which they draw on all of their linguistic and cultural resources and experiences in order to participate more fully in social and educational contexts.⁴

¹ CEFR, Council of Europe, 2001, p. 65.

² Ibid, p. 55.

³ Ibid, p. 28.

⁴ Ibid, p. 157.

Pluriculturalism: In a person's cultural competence, the various cultures (national, regional, social) to which that person has gained access do not simply co-exist side by side; they are compared, contrasted and actively interact to produce an enriched, integrated pluricultural competence.⁵

Production: Generating language through speaking and/or writing.

Reception: Receiving and processing language through listening and/or reading.

Task-based language learning: An approach to language learning where learners engage with real-life and authentic tasks through communication, providing meaningful opportunities to acquire language by using it.

Text: All products of language including oral, written and multi-modal content.

Translanguaging: The process whereby multilingual speakers use their plurilingual repertoire, as an integrated language system.

⁵ CEFR, Council of Europe, 2001, p. 6.

1

Introduction

The Leaving Certificate foreign language specification for Mandarin Chinese provides for learners from all language backgrounds and offers opportunities to develop communicative capacity and linguistic and intercultural awareness in a wide range of real-life and authentic contexts.

While the language is available to all students, including those from a heritage language background who wish to improve some or all of the skills within their communicative repertoire, and those who have no prior experience with the language, the expectations for learners articulated in this specification are at ab initio⁶ level.

Furthermore, while the CEFR Companion Volume is not generally used in relation to Mandarin Chinese, for transparency and consistency with the ab initio pitch, this specification has been informed by the CEFR educational aims and outcomes. The expectations for learners are broadly aligned with Pre-A1/A1 levels of the CEFR.

Assessment will be offered at both Higher and Ordinary levels.

⁶ Ab initio is a Latin term meaning from the beginning ('ab' meaning from and 'initio' meaning beginning).

2

Senior cycle

Learners in senior cycle are approaching the end of their time in school and are focusing on the directions they would like to take in their future lives. Senior cycle plays a vital role in helping learners to address their current needs as young adults and in preparing them for life in a changing economic and social context.

Senior cycle is founded on a commitment to educational achievement of the highest standard for all learners, commensurate with their individual abilities. To support learners as they shape their own future there is an emphasis on the development of knowledge and deep understanding; on learners taking responsibility for their own learning; on the acquisition of key skills; and on the processes of learning. The broad curriculum, with some opportunities for specialisation, supports continuity from junior cycle and sets out to meet the needs of learners, some of whom have special educational needs, but who all share a wide range of learning interests, aptitudes and talents.

Curricular components at senior cycle promote a balance between knowledge and skills, and the kinds of learning strategies relevant to participation in, and contribution to, a changing world where the future is uncertain.

Assessment in senior cycle involves gathering, interpreting and using information about the processes and outcomes of learning. It takes different forms and is used for a variety of purposes. It is used to determine the appropriate route for learners through a differentiated curriculum, to identify specific areas of difficulty or strength for a given learner and to test and certify achievement. Assessment supports and improves learning by helping learners and teachers to identify next steps in the teaching and learning process.

The experience of senior cycle

The vision of senior cycle sees the learner at the centre of the educational experience. That experience will enable learners to be resourceful, to be confident, to participate actively in society, to build an interest in learning, and to develop an ability to learn throughout their lives.

This vision of the learner is underpinned by the values on which senior cycle is based and it is realised through the principles that inform the curriculum as it is experienced by learners in schools. The specification has embedded key skills, clearly expressed learning outcomes, and is supported by a range of approaches to assessment; it is the vehicle through which the vision becomes a reality for the learner.

At a practical level, the provision of a high-quality educational experience in senior cycle is supported by:

- ▶ effective curriculum planning, development, organisation and evaluation
- ▶ teaching and learning approaches that motivate and interest learners, that enable them to progress, deepen and apply their learning, and develop their capacity to reflect on their learning
- ▶ professional development for teachers and school management that enables them to lead curriculum development and change in their schools
- ▶ a school culture that respects learners, that encourages them to take responsibility for their own learning over time, and that promotes a love of learning.

Senior cycle education is situated in the context of a broader education policy that focuses on the contribution that education can make to the development of the learner as a person and as a citizen. It is an education policy that emphasises the promotion of social cohesion, the growth of society and the economy, and the principle of sustainability in all aspects of development.

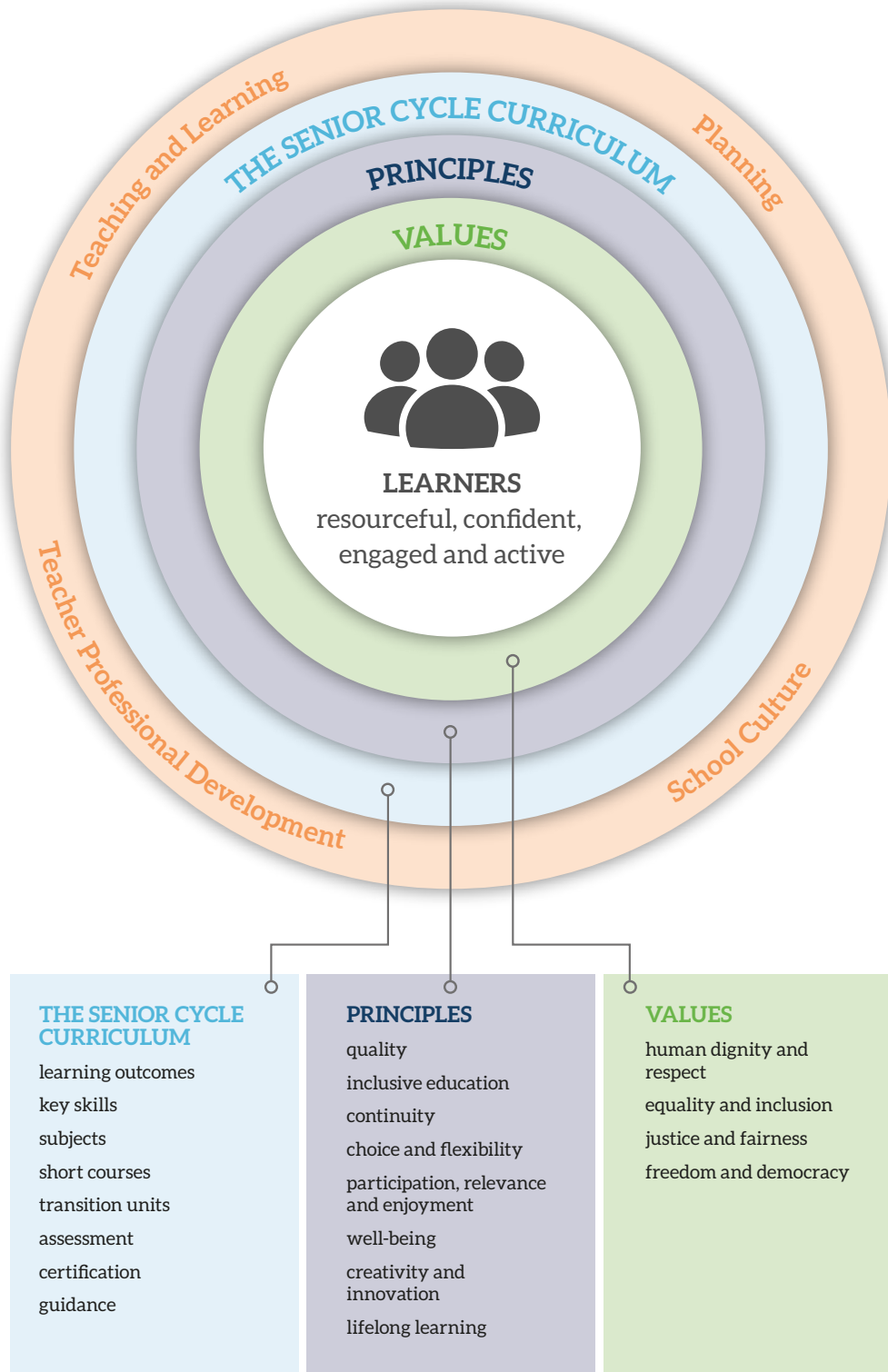


Figure 1: Overview of senior cycle

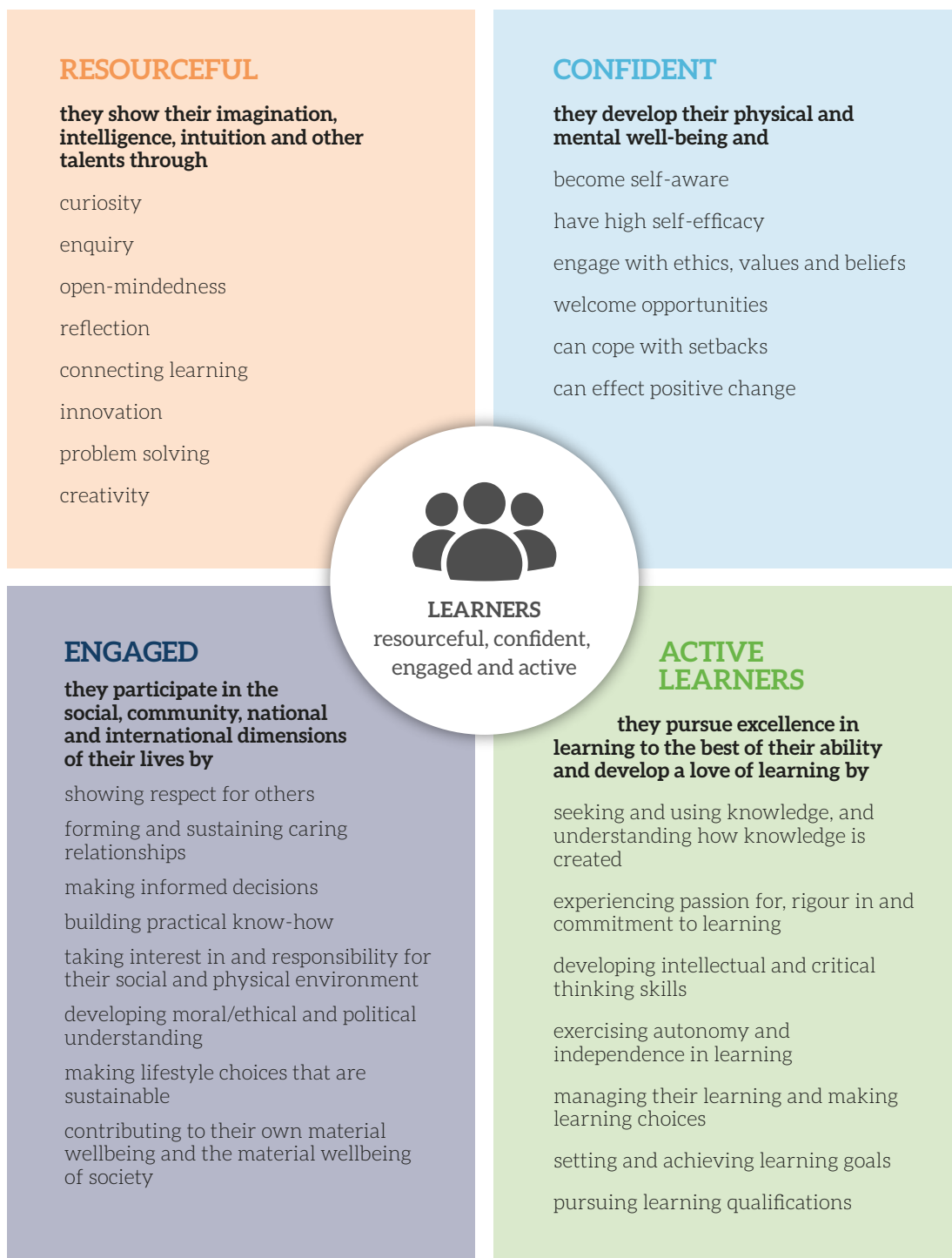


Figure 2: The vision of the learner

LANGUAGE LEARNING AND EDUCATION

Language is one of the means by which we think, organise our knowledge, express our thoughts and feelings, and communicate with others. We live in a world which is rich in languages, and Ireland, too, has its own linguistic heritage.⁷ All activities, in whatever language, are exercises in thinking.

One of the main ways that societies define and share their culture and identity is through language. It is a medium of interaction, through which knowledge and experience are communicated and organised. Every language has its own rich, distinctive features and complexities, as well as an intrinsic value as a resource for social participation, social cohesion, lifelong employment possibilities and mobility opportunities.

Language is also the means of self-expression and interpersonal communication as well as being the conduit for learning in the education process. It is a central factor in the growth of the learner as a person in the twenty-first century; how we learn about ourselves, others and the multilingual and multicultural world in which we live. Language learning also gives us access to the richness of the cultures and the mindset of the people who use that language.

Young people in Ireland are growing up in a dynamic, multilingual and multicultural society which is rapidly changing at local, national and global levels. They live in a world in which digital technologies, migration and mobility are bringing people closer together than ever before. In this society, shaped by social, political and economic forces, the opportunity to develop their plurilingual repertoire can be a source of empowerment for learners. Being exposed to language learning experiences offers learners skills, knowledge, understanding and values to negotiate these changes so that they can participate fully and effectively in our multilingual society and in the world of work.

When learners use more than one language, the spheres in which they can communicate are widened. This empowers them to more fully enjoy and appreciate a variety of cultural backgrounds; to participate in and contribute to society as global citizens and to access employment and mobility opportunities.

As well as benefitting society, a rich language learning repertoire has positive effects for learners' personal and intellectual development and their leisure activities. Cognitive development is enhanced by language learning and can contribute to higher levels of achievement in other educational areas such as mathematical abilities and the formulation of scientific hypotheses.

The school curriculum in Ireland is language-rich and therefore progress in every learning area involves competence in language. There are two official state languages, Irish and English, both of which are offered to learners alongside a range of languages from within and beyond Europe. Language learners gain a range of skills that relate to and build upon learning in other senior cycle subjects, enabling them to apply their existing language knowledge to new knowledge and to transfer their skills across all learning on their journey of lifelong learning.

In common with other subjects, an important feature of this language specification is the development of learners' ability to use language across the four modes of communication (reception, production, interaction and mediation⁸). An integrated skills approach to accessing, organising and presenting information is thus taken in this specification.

⁷ Framework for Consultation on a Foreign Languages in Education Strategy for Ireland, DES, 2014, p. 3.

⁸ CEFR Companion Volume, Council of Europe, 2018, p.33

These modes of communication are central and essential to the full experience of languages and help promote and support an action-oriented approach to language learning and teaching. Learners undertaking Leaving Certificate Foreign Languages bring their own unique language repertoires and experiences to learning a language. It is also important to acknowledge that learners may have varying levels of competence across the modes of communication arising from their prior learning and existing plurilingual repertoire.

It is intended that the experience of learning languages in senior cycle will be highly relevant to the lives of learners today and in the future. It will inspire in them an interest and curiosity about how they can use and learn languages and cultivate an appreciation of the similarities and differences between different countries, communities and cultures. This will set a solid foundation for learners to embark on a lifelong journey as plurilingualists, empowering them to have the skills and strategies to become more autonomous learners, to engage with the wider world, to integrate socially, and to become active citizens.

3

Leaving Certificate Mandarin Chinese

Time allocation

The Leaving Certificate Mandarin Chinese specification is designed for a minimum of 180 hours of class contact time.

Aim

Leaving Certificate Mandarin Chinese aims to develop learners' ability to use the target language for communicative purposes, to explore the interdependence between language and culture, to foster an appreciation of the value of languages for lifelong personal, educational, vocational and leisure purposes, and to derive enjoyment from language learning.

It aims to develop learners' plurilingual and pluricultural competence through language awareness by encouraging language learning strategies, fostering an understanding of how languages, in particular the target language, work. Recognising the connections between languages can assist the process of language learning.

Finally, this specification aims to support social integration and active citizenship as well as an appreciation for the unique and exciting opportunities offered by languages, at school, outside the classroom and in the workplace.

Objectives

The objectives of Leaving Certificate Mandarin Chinese are to enable learners to:

- ▶ communicate effectively and participate in everyday communications, in a variety of media, in the medium of the target language
- ▶ develop the capacity to use structures and features such as characters and tones, appropriately
- ▶ extract information and derive enjoyment from a variety of sources, including a range of media and authentic texts, in the target language
- ▶ become reflective and autonomous language learners who are actively involved in monitoring and assessing their own progress
- ▶ foster an appreciation of linguistic and cultural diversity and of the value of using their linguistic repertoire to better understand, celebrate and foster links with the target language communities
- ▶ enjoy their language learning experiences and develop appropriate language proficiency to actively pursue leisure activities, further language study, and/or career opportunities through the medium of the target language
- ▶ develop an awareness of how languages work and relate to one another, building on their linguistic knowledge and skills to support and motivate lifelong language learning and learning in general.

Related learning

Language education begins in the home, is embedded in the primary school curriculum and is further developed in junior cycle. This provides continuity and progression for senior cycle subjects including Leaving Certificate Mandarin Chinese. While some learners doing Leaving Certificate Mandarin Chinese may have followed a short course or Transition Year module in Mandarin Chinese, this is not a prerequisite- this specification is offered to all learners and pitched at ab initio level.

EARLY LEARNING AND PRIMARY EDUCATION

Children begin learning language at home and in their community. The home languages of Irish children may be one (or more) of up to two hundred languages.

Language is central to the theme of Communicating in *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* (NCCA, 2009). This encourages and enables children to share their experiences, thoughts, ideas and feelings with others with growing confidence and competence in a variety of ways in a range of languages.

Most children have experience of learning at least two languages in the Primary School Curriculum—Irish and English. The primary curriculum acknowledges and encourages children's use of other languages with a focus on socio-cultural, intercultural and language knowledge and awareness. Children and parents are encouraged to maintain and develop their home languages.

LANGUAGES AT JUNIOR CYCLE

The majority of learners continue to study Irish and English in the post-primary phase of their education. In addition, all junior cycle students are given the opportunity to learn a third or subsequent language.

Junior cycle language specifications equip learners with the skills and strategies to underpin further language learning, including additional languages which they can use for meaningful purposes. Learners are enabled to reflect on their language learning journey, to compare their target language with other languages they know, and to reflect on and become more aware of their own and other cultural identities.

LANGUAGES AT SENIOR CYCLE

In the initial part of senior cycle, Transition Year (TY) students may be exposed to a new language which enables them to add to their plurilingual and pluricultural repertoire.

Leaving Certificate Established curricular language learning options currently include Irish and English, a range of European languages, Russian, Arabic, Japanese, Ancient Greek, Latin and Hebrew Studies. Learners who engage with the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) also study a language.

The majority of senior cycle learners will have already been exposed to several languages at this point. Their home language may be different to the language of schooling, they may have classmates who speak other languages outside class so they bring to the task of learning another language many of the transferable language-learning skills and plurilingual competencies acquired previously. The learning of senior cycle languages aims to help the learner build on these skills and competencies.

The study of languages also relates to other subject areas. By learning about the way of life of target language-speaking communities, learners heighten their awareness of social and cultural diversity, the diversity of cultural heritage, literature, visual arts, music, history, geography and so on. In turn, they are enabled to reflect on and become more aware of their own and other cultural and linguistic identities.

The importance of the language community

Learners' engagement and sense of progress is enhanced as they are scaffolded into making connections between Mandarin Chinese and other languages they know. Their motivation is enhanced as they use the target language to successfully express and receive meaningful messages in their diverse language communities, be they within the classroom, the school environment or the wider community.

The language community has a central role to play in learners' progress. Language and cultural awareness help learners to develop their understanding of the importance of the language community, to be part of the language community, and to identify with the community. The language community provides learners with examples of the living language and learners observe and imitate elements of this language, which in turn acts as a stimulus. They understand the disparity and overlaps between their own language and the language provided by the language community.

Key skills

Curriculum and assessment focus on the embedding of key skills within learning outcomes. This is accompanied by a varied approach to assessment in which learners can generate responses that reveal the depth of their understanding. The embedding of key skills requires careful consideration of the balance between knowledge and skills in the curriculum and in learning, and of finding appropriate ways of assessing them.

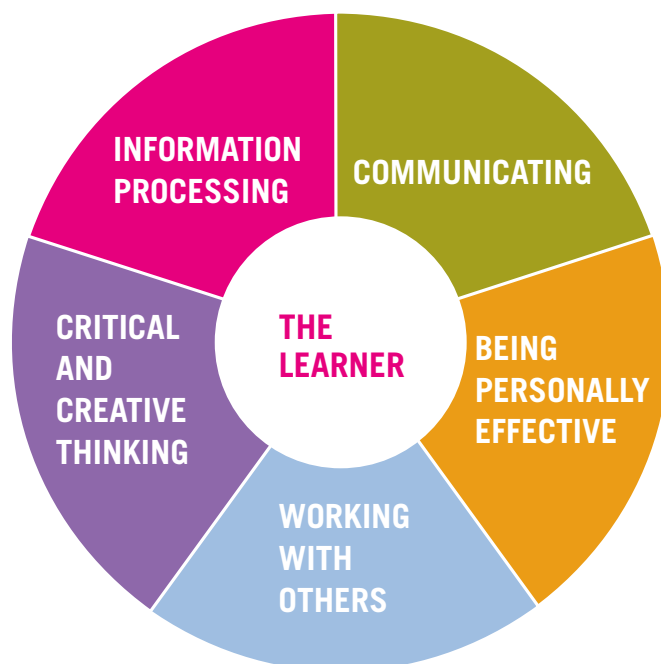


Figure 3: Key skills of senior cycle

There are five skills identified as central to teaching and learning across the curriculum at senior cycle. These are: information processing; Being Personally Effective; Communicating; Critical and Creative Thinking; and Working with Others. It is important for all learners to develop these key skills which contribute to helping them achieve their full potential, both during their time in school and into the future. This will allow them to participate fully in society, including family life, the world of work and lifelong learning. This specification is designed to help learners develop language proficiency, including cross-linguistic skills, as they build on their knowledge and understanding of language learning and form positive attitudes to learning in general.

INFORMATION PROCESSING AND CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING

Learners engage with the fundamental concepts and processes of language learning through participation in a range of learning and communication activities where they encounter the key skills in an integrated way. Learners develop *information processing skills* and *critical and creative thinking skills* by engaging in language activities where they are required to explore and understand authentic texts, identify and gather specific information from texts for a particular purpose and develop a range of creative texts.

COMMUNICATING

Communication skills are developed as learners collaborate and as they express and share their opinions and ideas. This encourages learners to engage in conversation, appropriate to the level of this specification, listening attentively and eliciting opinions and emotions. They also learn to provide information in a way that is relevant to and understandable by people with diverse levels of language knowledge and understanding.

WORKING WITH OTHERS AND BEING PERSONALLY EFFECTIVE

As language is communicative by nature, learning languages enables learners to cultivate an appreciation of working collectively, which can help motivation, and capitalise on all talents within a group. Self-awareness and persistence in the face of challenges enable learners to grow and to develop. Learners develop this skill of being personally effective as they develop strategies to learn and to build on previous knowledge.

Literacy

Literacy includes the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media, and digital media. Literacy acquisition is a central component of language acquisition. As learners become familiar with various text and media (including multi-modal texts), they develop literacy skills. In creating their own texts, communicating online, or seeking information in the Mandarin Chinese classroom, learners' language and digital skills are developed, and this significantly enhances their overall literacy, including digital literacy. The use of technology contributes significantly to fostering creativity, the acquisition of literacy and the satisfaction learners get from using language.

Translanguaging, the process whereby multilingual speakers use their plurilingual repertoire as an integrated language system, is a key element in the learners' ability to navigate the complex social and cognitive demands in the acquisition of new languages.

Language awareness is an important element of their literacy development. This awareness helps learners to make informed choices while manipulating subjects, ideas and concepts. Quantitative and numerical concepts also form part of language learning, deepening learners' numeracy skills.

Learning and teaching

Throughout their time in senior cycle, learners are encouraged to develop the knowledge, skills and values that will enable them to become more independent learners and to develop a lifelong commitment to improving their learning.

While the learning outcomes associated with each strand are set out separately, this does not imply they are to be studied in isolation. The learner's engagement and learning are optimised by a fully integrated experience of both strands. This specification gives teachers and learners the flexibility to use a range of learning and teaching approaches and strategies which are appropriate and relevant to the various contexts in which they use the language.

Senior cycle learners are encouraged to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that will enable them to become more independent learners and to develop a lifelong commitment to language learning. The interconnectivity between our language, our society and our interpersonal relationships should be embedded into classroom learning and teaching where teachers are encouraged to highlight the social nature of language.

The section below outlines the learning and teaching approaches embedded in the integrated strands of the specification.

THE LANGUAGE LEARNING JOURNEY

The learning and acquisition of Mandarin Chinese can be viewed as a language learning journey. The learners' focus on this journey is to be capable, independent and self-governing language users. An important part of the journey is prior language learning and acquisition. While they may not have learned Mandarin Chinese before, the skills learners have developed acquiring their first and subsequent language(s) play a very important role in their acquisition and development of this language. They develop language-learning strategies that are transferable across different languages, enabling them to make connections between aspects of language and everyday experiences.

Self-awareness is the most effective tool that language learners can use to make progress. With teachers' help and feedback and by reflecting on their language learning journey, learners take the necessary steps to develop their language proficiency. Teachers and learners collaborate on this part of lifelong language learning. The interactive, communicative use of the target language by both parties provides the input that is essential for language development. Teachers have expertise in the language and have particular knowledge and special skills relating to the teaching and assessment of language to facilitate learning. When learners encounter challenges and difficulties, teachers provide guidance, encouragement, help, feedback and support so that they may progress. Output is of particular importance for learners on this journey, as is a language-rich learning environment, opportunities for use of and interaction in the language.

To support this language-rich environment, it is desirable that learners are encouraged and scaffolded to engage with authentic texts. This could involve both fiction and non-fiction texts, depending on the interests of the learners, including short articles, poems, films, comic strips, lyrics etc. and taking into consideration the interests of the learners and the ab initio level of this specification.

Classmates, the learning environment and the community also have a role to play. By taking advantage of opportunities to communicate with classmates in group work, pair work and other collaborative activities and by engaging in tasks through the target language, learners can interact through the target language and develop skills in communication, listening to each other and reflecting on their own work and that of others.

Engaging in a variety of meaningful tasks and language activities will enable learners to take charge of their own learning, motivating them to set goals, develop action plans, to receive, respond to and reflect on assessment feedback. As well as varied teaching strategies, varied assessment strategies will support learning and provide information that can be used as feedback so that learning and teaching activities can be designed and/or delivered in ways that best suit individual learners and their language skills. By setting appropriate, real-life and engaging tasks, by asking higher-order questions and by giving feedback that promotes learner agency, assessment will support learning as well as capturing achievement.

Observation is another tool used by learners to make progress. A sense of curiosity and a desire to learn are created, and learners become self-aware. Through this awareness, they acknowledge the disparity between the level of their own language system (interlanguage) as well as richer, more accurate and more natural versions and examples of the language produced by others. They understand why they make mistakes and take responsibility for correcting those mistakes, producing richer, more accurate and more natural language themselves.

As described below, learners may use their Language Portfolio to regularly describe what they observe about the language, reflect on their progress and on the cultures of the target language country/countries and communities. They might also describe the steps they must take to make progress as a learner and a language user. Such elements necessarily underpin their ongoing progress in the language.

LANGUAGE PORTFOLIO

Over the two years of Leaving Certificate Mandarin Chinese, each learner develops a Language Portfolio. The Language Portfolio focuses on the learners' language journey, the process and progress of their language learning experiences. It places the learner at the centre of learning, teaching and assessment and facilitates autonomous learning.

The purpose of the Language Portfolio is to create a space in which learners can record and reflect on their growing language proficiency. It provides learners with an opportunity to set personal learning goals across the four modes of communication (reception, interaction, production and mediation) and to develop their plurilingual and pluricultural competence by becoming more aware of themselves as language learners and users.

Using the Language Portfolio supports ongoing formative assessment in the language classroom and facilitates learners in showcasing their language-learning achievements. Self-assessment is fundamental to the Language Portfolio and learners are encouraged to set goals for their learning and monitor their own progress through evaluative reflection. In addition to teacher feedback, learners will be encouraged to self-assess and peer-assess their work. This will further develop their autonomy as language learners and users.

The Language Portfolio will include a broad range of items, such as written texts, projects, audio-visual materials, learning logs, learner reflections and learning goals. It is recognised that in this context the learners' created texts⁹ may be presented in different formats—handwritten, multi-modal, and so on.

The portfolio as a means of documenting and reflecting on their learning will help learners to develop an awareness of the language learning process, to develop language learning strategies and to become more autonomous in their language learning.

As outlined in the Assessment section of this specification, learners will engage in conversation about their language portfolio during their oral examination. The Language Portfolio is a stimulus for conversation and discussion, however, the portfolio itself will not be assessed for certification purposes.

⁹ 'Text' refers to all products of language use including oral, written and multi-modal texts.

DIFFERENTIATION

The Leaving Certificate Mandarin Chinese specification is inclusively designed in three ways:

- ▶ through the learning outcomes of the specification
- ▶ in the process of learning and teaching
- ▶ through assessment for certification.

Learning outcomes should be achievable for every learner. They promote learning, teaching and assessment processes that develop learners' knowledge and understanding. They enable learners, through a variety of language learning experiences, to respond, analyse, evaluate and demonstrate their competencies as they progress.

Differentiation in learning and teaching supports equity and inclusion of opportunity and access for every learner. It addresses the barriers faced by learners and schools in meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse school population.

Teachers can reduce the barriers to learning and engage learners' interests through the many possibilities available to them in the language classroom such as learning and teaching strategies. Teachers differentiate by text, task, outcome, support (teacher support as well as other forms of support), learners' interests and preferences, and by using a variety of teaching approaches to learning.

An action-oriented approach supports the opportunities for learning presented by the diversity within classrooms.

Teachers give learners the opportunity to think critically and creatively about the tasks they are involved in, encouraging them to draw on their own plurilingual and pluricultural repertoire. They can offer learners multiple learning experiences based on the work and processes being undertaken in the classroom so that they complement learners' needs.

Assessment of Leaving Certificate Mandarin Chinese will be based on the learning outcomes in the specification. Learners will be assessed at two levels, Higher and Ordinary. All learning outcomes may be assessed at both Higher and Ordinary levels—this is outlined in detail on the section on Assessment for certification.

THE PLACE OF PIN YIN AND DIGITAL SCRIPTS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

In the early stages of learning Chinese, learners may find it helpful if they are exposed to Pin Yin. This Romanised system of writing Chinese words, can be very useful as a building block in the learning process; helping with pronunciation, allowing learners to start speaking the language quickly, having visual reminders of tones and being able to use it for input via digital technologies. While teachers may formatively assess learners' use of Pin Yin, this will not be formally assessed in the Leaving Certificate. Furthermore, while Pin Yin has its place in an ab initio classroom, learners will be encouraged not to become dependent on it.

In addition, learners will be exposed to, and supported in their comprehension of texts, written in simplified characters¹⁰ in clear and standard handwriting and familiar digital scripts presented in the fonts that are most commonly used for Mandarin Chinese.

¹⁰ Simplified Chinese characters are currently used officially in the People's Republic of China, Singapore and Malaysia. In comparison with the traditional Chinese characters which are used in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau, structural simplification and substantial reduction on the number of character sets were applied to the scheme of simplified Chinese characters.

4

Overview

The Leaving Certificate Mandarin Chinese specification is presented in two inter-related and inter-dependent strands.

Structure

The strands in the specification are Communicative Language Competence and Plurilingual and Pluricultural Competence. Learners develop their communicative language competence through reflective target language use which is, in turn, informed by plurilingual and pluricultural competence; both of which develop out of the learning.

The structure of the strands and elements are also set out in this way to support teachers in planning for learning, teaching and assessment and should not be considered in isolation. Teachers identify pathways through the specification which respond to learners' prior learning leading to deeper comprehension and application of their language skills in increasingly complex situations up to the point of being more proficient and confident language users.

In designing the strands, elements and learning outcomes for this specification, the following concepts and ideas were given particular attention:

- ▶ languages are interrelated and interconnected especially at the level of the individual
- ▶ every learner brings a unique and varied linguistic repertoire to their language learning experience
- ▶ languages and cultures are not kept in separate mental compartments
- ▶ all knowledge and experience of languages contribute to building up communicative competence
- ▶ barriers between languages can be overcome in communication and different languages can be used purposefully for conveying messages in the same situation.¹¹

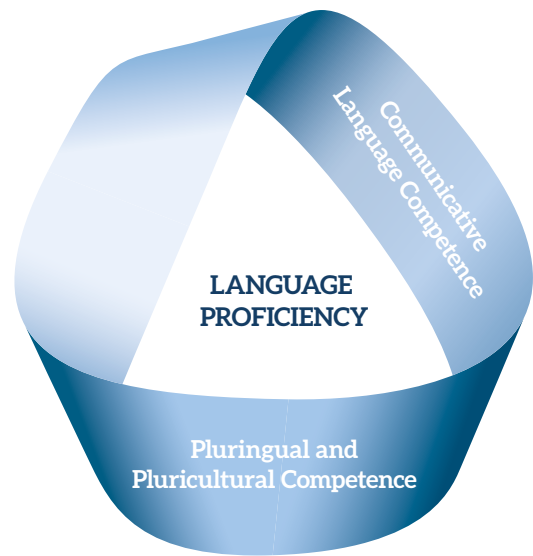


Figure 4: The integrated and interdependent nature of the strands and elements within this specification

¹¹ CEFR Companion Volume, Council of Europe, 2018, p. 157.

Outline of strands

COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE COMPETENCE STRAND

Language use is central to the development of overall language proficiency. The learning outcomes in this strand are organised under the four modes of communication identified in the CEFR Companion Volume¹²:

1. Reception
2. Interaction
3. Production
4. Mediation.

Active engagement with the learning outcomes in this strand enables learners to communicate effectively in the target language for meaningful purposes and to develop overall language proficiency.

PLURILINGUAL AND PLURICULTURAL COMPETENCE STRAND

Plurilingual and pluricultural competence is developed by and through the use of the target language. As outlined in the CEFR:

Plurilingual and pluricultural competence refers to the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social agent, has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures... The various cultures (national, regional, social), to which a learner has gained access, do not just exist side by side but they are compared, contrasted and they actively interact to produce an enriched, integrated pluricultural competence...¹³

The learning outcomes in this strand are organised as follows:

1. Plurilingual competence
2. Pluricultural competence.

Active engagement with these learning outcomes is central to supporting the development of overall language proficiency.

¹² CEFR, Council of Europe, 2001.

¹³ Ibid, p.168.

5

Strands of study

The strands, elements and their associated learning outcomes are set out below. While the strand units are numbered, this is for ease of identification and does not imply a hierarchy of approach. The strands themselves are not numbered because it is recognised that in order to acquire language proficiency, one needs to develop communicative competence, plurilingual and pluricultural competence in an integrated way.

Communicative language competence strand

This strand encompasses linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences. As indicated earlier, learning outcomes in this strand are organised by the four modes of communication (reception, interaction, production and mediation). In this strand, learners will actively engage in tasks and activities in order to develop their ability to communicate effectively in a wide range of scenarios/ contexts/situations.

LEARNERS LEARN ABOUT	LEARNERS SHOULD BE ABLE TO
Reception	<p>CLC1. Follow classroom interactions including pair and group work, very simple presentations on familiar topics and basic instructions.</p> <p>CLC2. Explore a range of short, simple authentic oral, written and multi-modal texts in a variety of genres and formats for example advertisements, announcements, narratives written in the most commonly-used fonts.</p> <p>CLC3. Identify and gather specific information from a range of short, simple oral, written and multi-modal texts expressed in everyday language for a particular purpose, especially if there is visual support.</p> <p>CLC4. Understand a lexical range comprised of individual words and simple expressions.</p> <p>CLC5. Identify simple information consisting of everyday language in a range of oral, written and multi-modal texts, especially if there is visual support.</p> <p>CLC6. Understand short and simple descriptions of places, events, personal experiences, feelings and perspectives, expressed in very simple everyday language.</p>

LEARNERS LEARN ABOUT	LEARNERS SHOULD BE ABLE TO
Interaction	<p>CLC7. Deal with simple transactions likely to arise while obtaining goods and services.</p> <p>CLC 8. Give short, very simple accounts of social and personal events, experiences and activities, and respond in face-to-face and online interactions.</p> <p>CLC9. Use short, very simple expressions and phrases to initiate and close simple face-to-face conversations, asking for clarifications as appropriate.</p> <p>CLC10. Ask and answer simple questions, exchange ideas, express emotions and information on familiar topics in everyday situations.</p>
Production	<p>CLC11. Convey their message clearly enough to be understood with generally clear pronunciation (e.g. tones), intonation, stress and rhythm.</p> <p>CLC12. Use characters to write short, coherent texts that are clear enough to be understood.</p> <p>CLC13. Use basic linguistic patterns, structures and strategies to communicate in familiar contexts.</p> <p>CLC14. Describe, in simple language, past, present or future events, activities or experiences.</p> <p>CLC15. Express feelings in a simple way, in writing and orally, on subjects relating to everyday life.</p> <p>CLC16. Develop a range of creative texts on subjects of personal interest in oral, written and multi-modal formats , for example songs, poems, drama, stories using very simple language.</p>
Mediation	<p>CLC17. Convey, in writing or orally, using very simple language the main points involved in clear, simple texts on subjects that are familiar and of personal interest.</p> <p>CLC18. Collaborate in simple practical tasks, asking what others think and understanding responses, in very simple language, asking for repetition or reformulation as necessary.</p> <p>CLC19. Convey simple, predictable information in familiar contexts given in short, simple signs and notices, posters and programmes.</p> <p>CLC20. Use simple words to ask someone to explain or clarify something.</p> <p>CLC21. Recognise when speakers disagree or when someone has a problem and use simple words and phrases to indicate empathy and interest.</p> <p>CLC22. Respond, in writing and orally, to short, simple creative oral, written and multi-modal texts about everyday topics, using very simple language to explain how it made them feel.</p>

Plurilingual and pluricultural competence strand

In this strand learners will develop their plurilingual and pluricultural competence.

Plurilingualism places value on the linguistic and cultural diversity of learners. Learners' knowledge of different languages and cultures are not siloed; all knowledge and experiences of languages and cultures interact and contribute to building communicative competence.

Plurilingualism highlights the need for learners to draw on all of their linguistic and cultural resources and experiences in order to more fully participate in social and educational contexts.¹⁴ This helps them to achieve mutual understanding, to gain access to knowledge and thus further develop their linguistic and cultural repertoire. The aim is not simply to achieve 'mastery' in one, two or three languages, each in isolation but rather to 'develop a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place.'¹⁵ Plurilingual comprehension involves, for example, using one's receptive knowledge in one language to deduce the meaning of texts in another language.

Pluriculturalism describes the use of pluricultural competences in a communicative situation when competences other than language competences come into play.¹⁶ The various cultures to which a learner has access to do not coexist side by side; they are not mentally compartmentalised. They are compared, contrasted and actively interact to enable the learner to communicate more effectively, for example, taking into consideration differences in behaviours (including gestures, tones and attitudes), discussing over-generalisations and stereotypes.¹⁷

LEARNERS LEARN ABOUT	LEARNERS SHOULD BE ABLE TO
Plurilingual competence	<p>PPC1. Make sense of unfamiliar characters by considering the constituent parts, such as radicals, word roots and lexical elements.</p> <p>PPC2. Recognise a range of linguistic patterns and structures (such as verbal system, syntax) and understand their meaning in context.</p> <p>PPC3. Apply communication and compensation strategies when communication is impaired (such as by using synonyms, gestures, translanguaging etc.) and thereby avoid misunderstandings.</p> <p>PPC4. Further develop learning strategies to recall, understand and use the target language for the purpose of basic oral and written communication.</p> <p>PPC5. Creatively exploit their plurilingual repertoire in different languages in order to communicate with others in unexpected situations or to make sense of short, very simple texts.</p> <p>PPC6. Recognise similarities and differences in the way concepts are expressed and understood across different languages.</p> <p>PPC7. Compare and contrast the target languages they already know or have studied, taking account of features such as tonality or logographic writing system, to support their comprehension of oral, written and multi-modal texts.</p> <p>PPC8. Reflect on the language-learning process, using feedback to improve.</p>

¹⁴ CEFR Companion Volume, Council of Europe, 2018, p. 157.

¹⁵ CEFR, Council of Europe 2011, Section 1.3, p. 5.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 53.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 158.

LEARNERS LEARN ABOUT	LEARNERS SHOULD BE ABLE TO
<p>Pluricultural competence: Awareness and understanding of the target language communities and cultures</p>	<p>PPC9. Explore and appreciate popular culture through a range of media</p> <p>PPC10. Research and discuss a range of aspects of the target language society/societies, such as some geographical features, significant historical events, facts, famous people and places.</p> <p>PPC11. Research aspects of the diverse cultural heritage in areas such as cuisine, folklore, music, traditions, the arts, and religions.</p> <p>PPC12. Interpret aspects of cultures and communities in everyday living, social-conventions, interpersonal relations, evolving values and beliefs through engagement with a range of short, very simple oral, written and multi-modal texts.</p> <p>PPC13. Develop and demonstrate awareness of customs, beliefs and attitudes of people in the target language cultures and communities.</p> <p>PPC14. Explain features of the target language cultures and communities to people with different cultural backgrounds, using very simple language in a range of relevant formats and media.</p> <p>PPC15. Demonstrate an awareness of and use appropriate verbal and non-verbal social conventions when interacting with others.</p> <p>PPC16. Consider similarities and differences between the target language culture(s) and other culture(s), respectfully recognising the feelings and different world views of others.</p> <p>PPC17. Support communication and interaction across cultures by showing interest, empathy, agreement and understanding.</p> <p>PPC18. Explore their own cultural identity and consider common stereotypes of their own and other cultures.</p>



6

Assessment for certification

Assessment in senior cycle takes different forms and is used for a variety of purposes. It is used to determine the appropriate route for learners through a differentiated curriculum, to identify specific areas of difficulty or strength for a given learner and to test and certify language achievement. Assessment supports and improves learning by helping learners and teachers to identify next steps in the language teaching and learning process.

As well as varied teaching strategies, varied assessment strategies will support language learning and provide information that can be used as feedback so that teaching and learning activities can be modified in ways that best suit individual learners. By setting appropriate and engaging language tasks, asking higher order questions and giving feedback that promotes learner autonomy, assessment will support language learning and summarise achievement.

Assessment for certification in Leaving Certificate Mandarin Chinese is based on the aims, objectives and learning outcomes of this specification. In any year, the learning outcomes to be assessed will constitute a sample of the outcomes from both strands.

The key skills of senior cycle are embedded in the learning outcomes and will be assessed in the context of the learning outcomes.

Assessment will focus on students' ability to use language effectively with accuracy and fluency appropriate to the age and stage of learning on understanding Mandarin Chinese as a linguistic system, on manipulating it for a range of communicative purposes, on the ability to develop their awareness as language users and their understanding of the interdependence of language and culture.

Assessment components

Leaving Certificate Mandarin Chinese will be assessed through three assessment components:

- ▶ an oral examination
- ▶ an aural examination
- ▶ a written examination.

Each component will be administered and assessed by the State Examinations Commission (SEC). All components of assessment will reflect the integrated approach outlined in this specification.

There are two levels of examination: Ordinary level and Higher level, to which a differentiated allocation of marks will apply, as outlined below in Figure 5.

The different mark allocation applied to Ordinary and Higher levels is based on the understanding that for most language learners, the development of receptive skills outpaces the development of productive skills during the process of language learning. Therefore, a greater proportion of the marks are allocated to receptive tasks at Ordinary level and to productive and interactive tasks at Higher level.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT	ORDINARY LEVEL	HIGHER LEVEL
Oral examination	30%	35%
Aural examination	30%	25%
Written examination	25% Reading	20% Reading
	15% Writing	20% Writing

Figure 5: Overview of assessment

Oral examination

The oral examination will assess language proficiency. It will focus, in part, on discussion about the Language Portfolio.¹⁸

The oral examination will specifically assess learners' ability to:

- ▶ use the target language with accuracy, fluency and complexity consistent with the requirements of the specification, while engaging in spoken reception, interaction, production and mediation
- ▶ demonstrate an awareness of the target language communities and cultures
- ▶ discuss a sample of texts from their Language Portfolio which reflect the plurilingual and pluricultural dimensions of their language learning journey.

Aural and written examination

The aural and written examination papers will consist of two components and be presented at Higher and Ordinary level.

- ▶ The first component (aural examination) will assess listening reception and mediation.
- ▶ The second component (written examination) will assess written reception, written production and mediation.

¹⁸ See page 16 for more information about the Language Portfolio.

General assessment criteria

ORAL COMPONENT

HIGH LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT	MODERATE LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT	LOW LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT
is characterised by a good level of accuracy, fluency, coherence and a basic range of vocabulary for very basic communicative scenarios.	is characterised by a moderate level of accuracy, fluency, coherence and a limited range of vocabulary for very basic communicative scenarios.	is characterised by a limited level of accuracy, fluency, coherence and a minimum range of vocabulary for very basic communicative scenarios.
The learners' range of vocabulary and structures allows them to ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate needs or very familiar topics.	The learners' range of vocabulary and structures allows them to ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate needs or very familiar topics with limited effectiveness.	The learners' range of vocabulary and structures allows them to ask and answer very simple questions in areas of immediate needs or very familiar topics with minimum effectiveness.
Learners can understand, present and offer basic information and simple views.	Learners can understand, present and offer basic information and very simple views with indications of requiring assistance in communication.	Learners can understand, present, offer very basic information and very simple views.
Learners can interact in a simple way in a conversation of very familiar situations and topics, in a context where the other party of the communication is aware of the level of the learner and is prepared to assist the communication with necessary repeating or rephrasing things at a slower rate of speech upon request in the target language.	Learners can interact in a simple way in a conversation of very familiar situations and topics, in a context where the other party of the communication is prepared to assist the communication with occasional repeating or rephrasing and repair things at a slower rate of speech.	Learners can interact in a very basic way in a conversation of very familiar situations and topics. However, the comprehension, expression and communication are largely dependent on repetition, rephrasing and repair by all parties of the communication.
Learners can demonstrate awareness and understanding of cultures associated with the target language, appropriate to their stage of learning.	Learners can demonstrate a limited awareness and understanding of cultures associated with the target language, appropriate to their stage of learning.	The learners' awareness of cultures associated with the target language is very basic or generally overlooked.

AURAL COMPONENT

HIGH LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT	MODERATE LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT	LOW LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT
is characterised by the learners' ability to recognise and understand familiar words and very basic phrases and expressions concerning daily life and/or immediate communicative contexts.	is characterised by the learners' ability to recognise and understand most familiar words and very basic phrases and expressions concerning daily life and/or immediate communicative contexts.	Is characterised by the learners' ability to recognise and understand some familiar and predictable words and very basic phrases and expressions concerning daily life and/or immediate communicative contexts.
Learners can find specific and predictable information and demonstrate a good understanding of the main point of the message, providing information is delivered slowly and clearly and/or repeated.	Learners can find some specific and predictable information and catch the main point of the message, providing information is delivered slowly and clearly and/or repeated.	Learners can catch the main point of the message, providing information is delivered slowly and clearly and/or repeated.
Learners can use very basic phrases and simple non-verbal expressions to convey simple and predictable information effectively.	Learners can use very basic and short phrases and simple non-verbal expressions to convey simple and predictable information.	Learners can use very limited basic and short phrases and a few repeated simple non-verbal expressions to convey simple and predictable information.
Learners can demonstrate some awareness of cultural conventions associated with the target language.	Learners can demonstrate a limited awareness of cultural conventions associated with the target language.	Learners' awareness of cultural conventions is very basic or generally overlooked.

WRITTEN COMPONENT

A HIGH LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT	A MODERATE LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT	A LOW LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT
<p>is characterised by the learners' ability to convey simple information and very general views through a series of simple phrases and sentences that are linked with a good sense of core ideas and necessary connectors to form a basic level of coherence.</p>	<p>is characterised by the learners' ability to convey very simple information and very general views through the use of simple isolated phrases and sentences and occasional connectors to form a very basic level of coherence.</p>	<p>is characterised by the learners' ability to convey very limited basic information and very general views through the use of very simple isolated phrases and sentences. Communication effectiveness may be impaired due to insufficient coherence or missing components of the produced written information.</p>
<p>Learners can understand very short and simple texts and can find specific information in very simple everyday texts.</p>	<p>Learners can understand very short and simple texts and can find some specific and predictable information in very simple and familiar everyday texts.</p>	<p>Learners can catch the main point of very short and simple texts and can find a few specific and predictable pieces of information in very simple and familiar everyday texts.</p>
<p>Learners demonstrate an awareness of the cultural conventions associated with the target language and can reflect such awareness with very simple and limited expressions in produced written information.</p>	<p>Learners demonstrate a limited awareness of the cultural conventions associated with the target language, while such awareness is rarely reflected or is misinterpreted in produced written information.</p>	<p>Learners demonstrate very little or no awareness of the cultural conventions associated with the target language, and such awareness is generally not reflected in their produced written information.</p>

LEAVING CERTIFICATE GRADING

The Leaving Certificate Mandarin Chinese examination will be graded using an 8-point grading scale at both Ordinary level and Higher level. The highest grade is a grade 1, the lowest grade a grade 8. The highest seven grades, 1-7, divide the marks range 100% to 30% into seven equal grade bands, each 10% wide, with a grade 8 being awarded for percentage marks of less than 30%. The grades at Higher level and Ordinary level are distinguished by prefixing the grade with H or O respectively, giving H1-H8 at Higher level, and O1-O8 at Ordinary level.

GRADE	% MARKS
H1/O1	90-100
H2/O2	80<90
H3/O3	70<80
H4/O4	60<70
H5/O5	50<60
H6/O6	40<50
H7/O7	30<40
H8/O8	<30

Figure 6: Leaving Certificate grading scale

Reasonable accommodations

The scheme of Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations operated by the State Examinations Commission (SEC) facilitates access to certificate examinations by students who would have difficulty in accessing the examination or communicating what they know because of a physical, visual, hearing and/or learning difficulty. The scheme assists students who have special educational needs to demonstrate what they know and can do in the certificate examinations, without compromising the fairness or integrity of the assessment. It provides accommodations for students with a variety of complex special educational needs including learning difficulties as well as permanent or temporary physical, visual, hearing, medical, sensory, emotional, behavioural or other conditions. Support arrangements are provided only to those who need them and the application process is school based. Further information about the scheme is available from the SEC.

7

Appendix

As the expectations for learners in this specification are broadly aligned with Pre-A1/A1 levels of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2018), the illustrative descriptor scales which follow are samples taken from this. They are not intended to replace learning outcomes, but to provide guidance about Pre-A1 and A1 levels. All CEFR illustrative descriptor scales can be found in the CEFR Companion Volume (ibid). The learning outcomes can be found on pages 20–23 of this document.

	PRE-A1	A1
General Linguistic Range	Can use isolated words and basic expressions in order to give simple information about him/herself.	Has a very basic range of simple expressions about personal details and needs of a concrete type. Can use some basic structures in one-clause sentences with some omission or reduction of elements.
Overall Reading Comprehension	Can recognise familiar words accompanied by pictures, such as a fast-food restaurant menu illustrated with photos or a picture book using familiar vocabulary.	Can understand very short, simple texts a single phrase at a time, picking up familiar names, words and basic phrases and rereading as required.
Overall Spoken Interaction	Can ask and answer questions about him/herself and daily routines, using short, formulaic expressions and relying on gestures to reinforce the information.	Can interact in a simple way but communication is totally dependent on repetition at a slower rate of speech, rephrasing and repair. Can ask and answer simple questions, initiate and respond to simple statements in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.
Overall Written Interaction	Can write short phrases to give basic information (e.g. name, address, family) on a form or in a note, with the use of a dictionary.	Can ask for or pass on personal details in written form.
Spoken Fluency	Can manage very short, isolated, rehearsed, utterances using gesture and signalled requests for help when necessary.	Can manage very short, isolated, mainly pre-packaged utterances, with much pausing to search for expressions, to articulate less familiar words, and to repair communication.
Overall Spoken Production	Can produce short phrases about themselves, giving basic personal information (e.g. name, address, family, nationality).	Can produce simple mainly isolated phrases about people and places.
Overall Written Production	Can give basic personal information in writing (e.g. name, address, nationality), perhaps with the use of a dictionary.	Can give information in writing about matters of personal relevance (e.g. likes and dislikes, family, pets) using simple words and basic expressions. Can write simple isolated phrases and sentences.

Self-assessment grid (with online interaction and mediation)

	A1
Spoken Interaction	<p>I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say.</p> <p>I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.</p>
Written and Online Interaction	<p>I can post short, simple greetings as statements about what I did and how I liked it, and can respond to comments in a very simple way.</p> <p>I can react simply to other posts, images and media.</p> <p>I can complete a very simple purchase, filling in forms with personal details.</p>
Spoken Production	<p>I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.</p>
Written Production	<p>I can write simple isolated phrases and sentences.</p>
Mediating a Text	<p>I can convey simple, predictable information given in short, simple texts like signs and notices, posters and programmes.</p>
Mediating Concepts	<p>I can invite others' contributions using short, simple phrases.</p> <p>I can use simple words and signals to show my interest in an idea and to confirm that I understand.</p> <p>I can express an idea very simply and ask others whether they understand me and what they think.</p>
Mediating Communication	<p>I can facilitate communication by showing my welcome and interest with simple words and non-verbal signals, by inviting others to speak and indicating whether I understand.</p> <p>I can communicate other people's personal details and very simple, predictable information, provided other people help me with formulation.</p>

There are no descriptors for online interaction and mediation at Pre-A1 level.

Qualitative features of spoken language (expanded with phonology)

	A1
Range	Has a very basic repertoire of words and simple phrases related to personal details and particular concrete situations.
Accuracy	Shows only limited control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns in a memorised repertoire.
Fluency	Can manage very short, isolated, mainly pre-packaged utterances, with much pausing to search for expressions, to articulate less familiar words, and to repair communication.
Interaction	Can ask and answer questions about personal details. Can interact in a simple way but communication is totally dependent on repetition, rephrasing and repair.
Coherence	Can link words or groups of words with very basic linear connectors like “and” or “then”.
Phonology	Pronunciation of a very limited repertoire of learnt words and phrases can be understood with some effort by interlocutors used to dealing with speakers of the language group concerned. Can reproduce correctly a limited range of sounds as well as the stress on simple, familiar words and phrases.

There are no descriptors for qualitative features of spoken language at Pre-A1 level.

Written assessment grid

	A1
Overall	Can write simple isolated phrases and sentences. <i>Longer texts contain expressions and show coherence problems which make the text very hard or impossible to understand.</i>
Range	Has a very basic repertoire of words and simple phrases related to personal details and particular concrete situations.
Coherence	Can link words or groups of words with very basic linear connectors like “and” and “then”.
Accuracy	Shows only limited control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns in a memorized repertoire. <i>Errors may cause misunderstandings.</i>
Description	Can write simple phrases and sentences about themselves and imaginary people, where they live and what they do, etc.
Argument	There are no descriptors for Argument at A1 level

There are no descriptors for written assessment at Pre-A1 level.

